

OUT OF TIME

Issue No. 20

Out of Control--Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners

November 1993

REMEMBERING RESISTANCE

There is a long rich herstory of women imprisoned for resisting injustices and cruelty. Since the beginning of colonialism in the Americas, there have been women political prisoners. The women who resisted came from different countries and different backgrounds. They were labelled criminals or crazy and often received disproportionately long sentences. The u.s. government continues to deny their existence as political prisoners. We want to remember these women and embrace them in our hearts.

On March 4, 1954, Lolita Lebron along with Irvin Flores, Rafael Cancel Miranda and Andres Cordero, entered the gallery of the u.s. house of representatives and opened fire. The four Puerto Rican Nationalists wanted independence for Puerto Rico and the action against congress was a response to years of political repression and the incarceration of hundreds of Nationalists and their supporters by the u.s. government in Puerto Rico.

The four Nationalists were given sentences of 25-75 years without parole. Lolita Lebron served 25 years in prison. Many of those years were spent in solitary confinement, suffering severe physical and psychological torture. Lolita actively supported progressive struggles inside prison and participated in a hunger strike in support of the Attica Rebellion.

As a result of pressure from the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, their supporters and the military and political actions of the clandestine organizations, all four Nationalists were released unconditionally in 1979.

After her release, Lolita went on a speaking tour around the u.s. in support of other Puerto Rican prisoners of war. The following is a quote from a speech given in 1980.

"Comrades, we must take up arms if it is necessary in order to bring this evil empire to its knees and to destroy it. Companeros, when we attacked the Capital and Congress of the United States of North America, we had an inalienable right to do this and we felt proud to have taken up arms. We, the people of the world, can't submit ourselves to injustice, indignity and murder. We must rise up against these things and if we die in the act then we at least die standing."



Every issue of OUT OF TIME is put together by two or three members of Out of Control (OOC) on a rotating basis. The group as a whole doesn't edit each issue, and the articles included don't necessarily reflect the views of everyone.

URGENT URGENT URGENT

Now's the Time to Let Reno Know What You Want

Silvia Baraldini is an Italian National serving a 43 year sentence for RICO charges involving the liberation of a prominent Black Panther Party leader, Assata Shakur, and other political actions. Under the international treaty, Council of Europe Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Silvia can and should be returned to Italy.

After George Bush and friends rejected Silvia's request for transfer to Italy, the Italian government reapplied for her release in April, 1993. If she isn't granted repatriation this time, she will be forced to wait another two years before she can even begin to reapply.

So here's the deal. We received a letter from the Justice Department saying that Janet Reno is currently reviewing Silvia's case. Because this is a new administration, there is a very real possibility for a different outcome this time. But, in order for that to happen, we need to flood the Justice Department with phone calls and/or FAXs. From Friday, October 29 - Friday, November 5, there will be a major national phone/FAX blitz to Janet Reno, requesting that they continue to review the case and repatriate Silvia to Italy immediately. Show your concern and your outrage by making a commitment to make these phone calls. You can call as many times as you want and/or get five of your friends to get involved in the struggles of political prisoners by making these calls.

It's really important that J.Reno hear from all of us. Thus far they have claimed that the rejections of Silvia requests have been based, in part, on the lack of concrete support they have seen within the U.S. We know that support exists, but they need to hear it from us directly. Your calls during this time are absolutely crucial. Really.

FAX # - 202-514-0468 PHONE # - 202-514-2000

SILVIA EVENT

On October 7, the Release Silvia! Committee and the National Committee to Free Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War had a video showing and discussion. They showed *Through the Wire* and a clip from a longer film about the Puerto Rican women prisoners of war at Pleasanton federal prison.

Through the Wire is still a very startling and provocative film documenting the attempt by the u.s. government to open an underground control unit prison in Lexington, KY especially for women political prisoners. Made by Nina Rosenblum and narrated by Susan Sarandon, the film was shown on PBS a few years ago. It is definitely a film worth seeing especially since the Unit was closed in 1988 after a massive grass roots campaign and a law suit in federal court.

If anyone is interested in having a showing of *Through the Wire*, please call us at 415-647-0158.

The Repression Page

Popes, Plastic Bags, and Graveyards

by Daniel

On August 12, 1993 pope john paul 2 arrived in Denver colorado. That same day a grand jury in Jefferson County colorado handed down indictments against 4 people, Nadine Connelly, Madrid St. Angelo, Taylor St. John, and Lorna Jane Wheeler. They were each charged with two felony and two misdemeanor counts (desecration of a venerated object and criminal mischief). On January 14, 1993, more than 6 months previous someone covered a bunch of tombstones in a catholic cemetery with plastic bags painted with such messages as "Jesus died of AIDS," and "Virgin Mary sez: No Latex, No Sex." A large stone crucifix was also damaged.

According to the Jefferson County sheriff's department the timing of the indictments and the arrival of the pope were coincidence. The chief deputy d.a. in Denver ascribes the delay from the time the action was supposed to have happened to the action by the grand jury (six months later) to the grand jury being busy.

Reportedly 46 people testified before the grand jury. 26 of those were law enforcement types; 20 were people from the Lesbian/Gay community. The deputy d.a. in Denver credits information from the queer community with providing evidence that helped lead to the indictment of the four.

The indictment stated that the four were associated with ACT UP, although according to newspaper reports, "leaders" of the Lesbian/Gay community were quick to disassociate themselves from the four, one even going so far as to say that this (collaborating with the police) was "all part of the Denver area's efforts to welcome the pope..."

Whether or not one agrees or disagrees with this action, or any action; whether or not one likes or dislikes the people involved, resisting the police should be something that unites us as a community and as a movement.

The anti-gay, AIDSphobic atmosphere which pervades much of colorado will only lead to more arrests by the State. The passage of Amendment 2 guarantees this.

The colorado chapter of the National Lawyers Guild has voted to represent these four people. St. Angelo and St. John who live in Chicago are facing attempts by the state of colorado to extradite them; Wheeler was taken into custody in Los Angeles where she lives, and extradited to Denver, where she later bonded out.

For more information about this case contact LAGAI at (415) 826-3984.

GRAND JURIES

State and Federal governments have a history of using grand juries to gather information on political activists and groups. A purpose of a grand jury is to gather information which local prosecutors aren't able to come up with. They are shrouded in secrecy, ostensibly to protect the rights of the accused. But for at least 3 decades grand juries have been used as part of the attack on the left in the u.s. They have been used against the Puerto Rican Independence movement, the Black liberation movement, the American Indian movement, the women's liberation movement, the anti-Vietnam movement, and others. What is happening in Denver is only a more recent example.

In 1988 a grand jury was convened in San Francisco, supposedly to investigate police brutality at an anti-Bush demo, where Dolores Huerta was badly injured. Because of the ostensibly benign purpose of this grand jury, some people did cooperate. But some did not. One grand jury is indistinguishable from another. The grand jury which asks if you were at a demonstration (to determine if you saw the person standing next to you get hit by a cop) is the same grand jury that will ask why you were at that demo, what group you're in, who else was at the demo, who else is in your group, etc.

Queers in Denver testified before the grand jury. Who knows what questions were asked and what was learned by the prosecutor. The homophobic atmosphere in Colorado combined with the powers held by grand juries make for a great capacity for intimidation. Refusing to testify can result in imprisonment for the duration of a grand jury; a later one can do the exact same thing. Thousands of political activists have been called before grand juries. Hundreds have been jailed for refusing to cooperate.

Organizing is the best way to beat this situation. In 1989 members of the John Brown Anti Klan Committee were called to testify before a federal grand jury in Chicago. It was supposedly investigating death threats sent on fake

Committee stationery. Because of the organizing involved these people were able to resist without doing jail time.

The grand jury was originally designed to guard against the tendency of governments to use the criminal justice system to punish its critics. Instead, it has done just that. They have been given a free hand for such things as investigating groups who had "a common belief in socialism."

Anyone can be called as a witness before a grand jury. A person is left with the choice of cooperate or go to jail. Because of this the best defense is often organizing.

Non-collaboration with a grand jury is a legal strategy and a political principle. One who cooperates "just a little bit" gives up the right to challenge the political nature of grand jury investigations. Resisting is the strongest way targets of government repression can resist efforts to disrupt and discredit their lives.

Cooperating with the police is dangerous for queers and for the queer movement. In January 1991 the Lesbian/Gay liaison to the chief of police in San Francisco attempted to "join" Queer Nation. She used information gathered at the meetings she attended to provide evidence during the investigation following the AB101 veto protest at the state building in San Francisco.

Alert

The October 27 Bay Guardian reported that unless a planned deal between San Francisco d.a. Arlo Smith and the ADL goes through a grand jury will begin investigating the scandal on Nov. 9. LAGAI feels strongly that this grand jury is very likely to repeat the experience of the grand jury in the Huerta beating case. LAGAI believes that because grand juries operate in secrecy, non-cooperation is the best strategy and that any investigation of the ADL should be in a public forum.

"MALPRACTICE" AT CHOWCHILLA

By law, women in prison are entitled to the same standard of care as the community outside. At the Central California Women's Facility at Chowchilla (CCWF), there is no decent medical care. The health care is so bad that a 'group appeal' complaint was signed by over 450 women at the prison.

The prison just hired a part-time gynecologist but the waiting time is several months even for women with abnormal pap smears and the prison doctor in the infirmary is a pediatrician. Most medical care is done by MTA's - guards with only First Aid training. The MTA's diagnose, treat and prescribe medication; activities that are legally done, in California, only by RN's, physicians assistants or MD's. MTA's make over \$56,000/year, more than it would cost to have an RN on staff.

One woman feeling stomach pains, was diagnosed by a MTA as having a bladder infection - in fact she was in premature labor and the baby died. Another woman had HIV-related thrush in her mouth; the MTA gave her vaginal suppositories to eat. Another woman died from an untreated brain tumor after the MTA told her she had migraines and was faking seizures.

The wide scope of the guard's responsibilities and the amount of money they make is due to the strength of the Prison Guard's Union (CCPOA). The CCPOA is the second most endowed lobby in California and they wield a huge amount of power over both the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the State Legislature: they are behind the successful movement to build more and more prisons in California.

Over one hundred women at CCWF have been diagnosed HIV+, yet there is no HIV/AIDS specialist on staff. Women are told they won't be tested for HIV until it's "medically indicated": i.e. until they are already sick and even then the test given is the least accurate test available. By denying the women knowledge of their status, the prison is denying them access to treatment and the chance to prolong their lives. The food served inside prisons is not known for its nutritional value, never mind its flavor. For HIV+ women it is more problematic. For instance there are no high-protein diets available.

There is no confidentiality and all known HIV+ women live on C yard. There are big signs that say "BEWARE; THERE ARE HIV INFECTED INMATE PERSONS HOUSED IN THIS FACILITY". Many women are scared to identify as HIV+ and don't ask for help.

There is no AIDS education done at CCWF. When the prisoners try to be peer educators on their own, the prison attempts to silence them. HIV/AIDS education brochures have been systematically confiscated by the Program Administrator and hoarded in her office. She says she doesn't have the time to do distribution. Other mailings have been sent back marked "inappropriate" and AIDS advocacy and education groups have been denied access to the women inside. Ultimately the prison administration is abetting the spread of HIV/AIDS in the prison.

There was one victory recently. After a postcard campaign to the warden at CCWF and a meeting between the DOC and ACT-UP, one of the peer educators received all the education material that had been kept in the Administrator's office. There were too many boxes to even fit in her cell. Everything was finally distributed to other prisoners.

The Department of Health has a mandate to stop epidemics in the state. This is not being done in the prisons. TB and HIV/AIDS are spreading rapidly and the California prison system ranks 4th in AIDS related deaths according to a recent Bureau of Justice survey.

Most of the women at CCWF are doing short time for non-violent crimes. Without decent medical care and early release for terminal illnesses, prisoners are receiving death sentences.

ACT-UP Prison Issues Committee is calling for a state wide investigation into health care in California prisons. The Coalition to Support Women Prisoners at Chowchilla recently formed to investigate, publicize and protest the terrible medical care at CCWF. You can help by writing letters to:

Warden Teena Farmon or Director James Gomez
CCWF PO Box 1501 DOC PO Box 942883
Chowchilla, CA 93610 Sacramento, CA 94283

You can contact the Coalition at 415-752-2765 or 415-861-4058

Following are excerpts from articles written by women in CCWF for a pamphlet, *Voices from Inside*, produced by ACT-UP Prison Issues Committee.

The incarcerated women with HIV/AIDS at CCWF always have great problems with the medical department. No one seems to be able to understand that HIV/AIDS cannot be treated like a common cold... the medical administration instructs them to treat HIV/AIDS just like a cold.

The system here is set-up to oppress, depress and stress out any incarcerated woman who wishes to fight back with a pen instead of her fist! Program Administrator Gloria Henry who runs C-yard and serves as the HIV/AIDS coordinator, said that I could not take a counseling course or become an HIV/AIDS (peer) counselor while doing time here. This is ridiculous!

The women would rather talk to the four incarcerated educators, than to the staff...Needless to say, we are very proud of the work we do.

The institution says I incite others. I will not let the California penal system 'kill' me! Murder by proxy! I seriously feel this is what's happening in the California prisons...The PERFECT CRIME--MURDER! I often ask myself why don't they just line the HIV/AIDS persons against the wall and shoot them. It would be more merciful than what is happening now. Oh, I forgot, that is not the American way! One must suffer to die in America!!

Joann Walker #W17572
CO9-19-2L, CCWF
PO Box 1508
Chowchilla, CA 93610

...I felt like I had HIV+ on my forehead and that no one would want to be around me I was afraid of being rejected. My parents and children were very supportive when I talked to them. But I couldn't call home every day and I didn't want to worry my family. I was really going through it. Well, finally God sent me some help. There were two ladies put in my room. These ladies were only in the room with me for less than a month, but I learned a lifetime of knowledge from them...I started finding my strengths and my power to change the way that the women felt about this devastating disease.

Finally me and a few other women started putting in proposals for peer counseling and more education services... By word of mouth, I've been doing pre-release and substance abuse classes also. Now Ivy, Walker and myself are approved to go to other yards doing AIDS presentations.

I think I've finally found my purpose in life. Educating is like a high to me. I'm going home in December. One of my biggest goals is to come back to the California Department of Corrections as an AIDS educator, not as an inmate.

Deborah Paul
CCWF at Chowchilla

WOMAN PRISONER IN GERMANY

Irmgard Moller has been in prison since 1973. She is a Red Army Faction (RAF) member and participated in actions in support of the Vietnamese struggle, against U.S. and German military installations. While in prison, Irmgard has been stabbed, tortured and subjected to years of solitary confinement. All this treatment is in severe violation of a UN-pact on civil and political rights. The UN Human Rights Commission officially criticized Germany in

1978, 1986 and 1990 for these violations. No effect.

In Germany, there is a call for Irmgard's immediate release and the release of all prisoners subject to the same cruel conditions. Petitions and more info are available from Out of Control or write to A Brenneke-Eggers, Weidenallee 56, 20357 Hamburg, Germany. FAX 004930-450-5831.



UPDATE: Norma Jean Croy

The state of California has requested and received a 30 day extension before answering the federal writ of habeas corpus that was filed in August '92. Once answered, the plaintiff (that 'Norm''s side) has 30 days to rebutt and seek evidentiary hearing before the federal kourt. Now the state can ask for another extension, but the judge is bound to get tired of these stall tactics at some point. When the case is finally heard, we feel confident that the absurdity of keeping "Norm" locked up for a crime that the state has already acknowledged was not a crime will be exposed. There will probably be a need for people to go to some hearings and be a positive presence for this fight. Also, stay tuned and aware cuz we will be starting a post card campaign to Reno, et al in the very near future.

Sheridan Federal Prison Burns !

On September 2, 1993, prisoners rioted at FCI Sheridan, a medium security federal prison near Salem, Oregon. According to African-American prisoners there, the administration had ordered members of the Nation of Islam to stop "saluting" each other in their religious service. When they failed to alter their religious service several "leaders" were placed in the hole. In response, a group of African-American prisoners, mostly Muslims, armed themselves with bats and sticks and starting several fires, burning one building to the ground.

There had been rumors of possible rioting since the end of July when prisoners who had rioted at FCI Phoenix were sent to FCI Sheridan. These prisoners had been protesting the longer sentences received by African-Americans convicted of drug offenses as compared to whites. Given this situation, the administration's attack on Muslim religious expression was clearly a double provocation of the African-American population.

The entire prison was placed on lock-down for 7 days, with prisoners confined three to each two-person cell. (Due to the overcrowding , many prisoners ordinarily slept in the open recreation areas of each wing.) Approximately 100 mostly Muslim prisoners were transferred out of the prison, and all Nation of Islam activities are still banned as of this writing.

HIV+ CHILDREN

Pleasanton AIDS Counseling and Education (PLACE), the peer education group of women prisoners at FCI-Pleasanton in California, has adopted the HIV/AIDS ward at Oakland Children's Hospital. The prisoners will be making blankets, quilts, stuffed toys and sweaters for the children. Please send donations of yarn, fabric, stuffing or money to Peggy Macy, Social Worker, HIV Ward, Oakland Children's Hospital, 747 52nd St. Oakland, CA 94609.

LAGAI/OOC
3543--18th St., Box #30
San Francisco, CA 94110

Ed Mead Released From Prison!

Ed Mead, the longest held white political prisoner in the us, was paroled on October 14, 1993. Ed served 18 years for his activities with the George Jackson Brigade, a multi-racial working class group that provided armed support for various Native American, labor and prisoner struggles in the northwest in the early '70's. The average time served in Washington state for the crimes Ed was convicted of is under 5 years.

Ed spent all of his years in prison struggling for justice and organizing prisoners to educate themselves and take more responsibility for their actions. In the mid-1970's he organized Men Against Sexism to stop prisoner on prisoner rapes at the infamous Walla Walla (WA) maximum security state prison. He helped to establish support groups of prisoners' families and friends at various prisons around the country. For many years he published the Red Dragon prisoner newspaper, the Marion Times while in the Marion Control Unit, and more recently the Prison News Service, an internationally respected source of legal news and analysis for prisoners and their supporters.

Ed is currently with family near Seattle. We send our deepest respect and congratulations, and wish him well in getting established.

IN MEMORY OF MANNY ROSENBERG

Manny Rosenberg died of cancer at age 76 on August 31, 1993. One of his last wishes was that he get to see his daughter Susan. Susan Rosenberg, one of the Resistance Conspiracy Defendants, is presently doing a 58 year sentence in a control unit at Marianna, Florida. Consistent with their general humanitarian policies [not], the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) declined. The news activated the political prisoner network and within a matter of a few days Attorney General, Janet Reno/BOP received in excess of a thousand messages of protest via fax, telegram, telephone, etc.. It worked!

Susan was scooped up in the wee hours of the morning and flown to Danbury Hospital in Connecticut, which had been transformed into a military encampment for the occasion. She got to spend two hours with her father.

A memorial was held for Manny in New York City on October 21, 1993. Manny fought tirelessly for social justice throughout his lifetime and this was clearly reflected at the memorial which was attended by fellow activists from many different liberation movements. Ahmed Obafemi of the New Afrikan Peoples Organization sang in tribute.

For those of us in Out Of Control who knew Manny personally, the connection was primarily through the effort to shut down the Lexington Control Unit and defense work surrounding the Resistance Conspiracy Case. His level of sensitivity to the struggles of all people, including women and lesbians, and his ability to express his emotionality, are truly unique qualities. Manny Rosenberg was a very unique man. We are proud to have struggled along side him and will miss him sorely.